

The Priceless Gift
(Rev. Dr. John Bartol)

*“The shepherds went to Bethlehem because they were promised a Saviour.” —
Handel H. Brown.*

We cannot imagine a Christmas without gifts. This is the very nature of its observance. Most of us are more in the spirit of giving at Christmas than at any other time. In fact, if we felt the same concern for the needs of others throughout the entire year, life for many would be so much better.

The origin of the spirit of giving is often traced to the story of the Wise Men, who came from the east: “They presented to the Christ child gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh” (Matthew 2:11). These were costly gifts, perhaps beyond the means of many of us today. Our gifts should also cost something, not necessarily in material value, but they should represent our best — gifts that come from the heart.

This truth is beautifully set forth in a favourite Christmas carol entitled, “The Little Drummer Boy.” A very poor boy owned only a drum, which he gladly played. He found himself standing with others, before the manger cradle of the baby of Bethlehem. All those around him were giving gifts to the baby Jesus — costly gifts. He feels that he should also give something. But what can a poor boy give? Then he sings:

“Little baby I am a poor boy too. I have no gifts to bring,
that’s fit to give a king. Shall I play for you on my drum?” This he does:
“I played my drum for him, I played my best for him. Me and my drum.”

What an uplifting thought! This poor boy gave of himself. He offered what he did best, and this was truly acceptable. He teaches us that to live is to give. We are not truly living unless we are giving — giving ourselves! Strange how long it takes all of us to realize this. If we are honest, we would say that the gifts that bring us the most pleasure are the ones we give rather than the ones we receive.

A few years ago, in the Christmas edition of the Chicago Daily Times, the artist, Vaughan Shoemaker, had drawn a Christmas tree from which all the gifts had been removed except one. This remaining gift was marked ‘salvation’ and underneath were the words, “The gift still waiting at the tree.” God placed his Christmas gift on a tree — the old rugged cross. This gift of salvation through Christ is freely offered to all who believe.

There are two sides to a gift — giving and receiving. Both are essential! God so loved that he gave. That is the heart of Christmas — a loving God, a giving God. God gave his son to us. We are invited to receive Him. Have you left your gift unclaimed? Or, perhaps you have accepted the gift but neglected to open it and discover its priceless value.

“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).